



UNITED STATES SENATE
**REPUBLICAN
POLICY COMMITTEE**

Larry E. Craig, Chairman
Jade West, Staff Director

Conference Report Highlights

October 27, 1997

H.R. 2107 -- Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, FY 1998

The Senate will take up the conference report to the Interior appropriations bill [H. Rept. 105-337] on Tuesday with 90 minutes of a debate. The House passed the conference report on October 24, 1997, by a vote of 233-171. As of the afternoon of October 27, a Statement of Administration Policy had not yet been issued on the conference report. (The Administration did, however, send a detailed letter to conferees on September 30, suggesting the bill should be vetoed if a number of concerns were not "resolved satisfactorily." Discussed below are the resolutions of the four major policy issues after consultation with the Administration. However, at press time, the Administration had not articulated opposition to or endorsement of the provisions.)

Funding Totals

The conference report total in new budget authority for FY 1998 is \$13.79 billion, which is \$33.1 million more than the Senate-passed bill, and \$836.6 million more than the House-passed bill. This amount is \$275 million more than the FY 1997 level of \$13.51 billion.

Resolution of Contentious Issues

Land Exchanges: The conferees provided a special appropriation of \$699 million for priority land acquisitions and exchanges, which was first referenced by the balanced budget agreement between Congress and the Administration. This appropriation was included in the Senate-passed bill, but was not funded in the House-passed bill. Language authorizing those two projects was included in the conference report in consultation with the Administration. However, as part of the authorizing language, the conferees provided that appraisals will be required on properties purchased in both the Headwaters, CA, and the New World Mine site in Montana -- to which the Administration did not agree.

National Endowment for the Arts: The conferees agreed to provide \$81.2 million for grants and administration of the National Endowment for the Arts, compared to \$83.3 million provided by the Senate and zero provided by the House. The conferees also require the NEA to restructure its administrative budget, and include several of the Senate-passed provisions, including requirements that NEA give priority to underserved populations, raise private funds for a supplemental endowment fund to augment the Federal contribution to the endowment, and restrict certain grants to individuals for literature, national heritage and American jazz masters fellowships.

Forest Plan Revision Moratorium: The conferees agreed to include a moratorium on the initiation of any new National Forest Plan revisions until the rules governing such Forest Plans (which have been under development since 1990) are released. The Senate-passed bill would have prohibited the Forest Service from revising **any** national forest land management plans -- including ones in the regulatory pipeline -- until the Administration issues the rule.

Forest Roads Purchaser Credit: The conferees dropped the House language that would have imposed a \$25 million limitation on "purchaser credits" for road construction by private timber purchasers. The Senate had no limit, but did provide certain instructions regarding the timber road credits that were adopted by the conferees. The Administration continues to have concerns with the Purchaser Road Credit program.